

# the meeting house

Inspiring Social and Emotional Growth Through Community and Connection

## Introduction to The Meeting House

At The Meeting House, we value social emotional well-being as an essential quality of an inclusive, healthy society that empowers and inspires individuals to lead better lives and communities. Social emotional skills are personal qualities that engender sustenance and peace among individuals, communities, cultures, races, and religions in our society. Now, more than ever, our focus on SEL (social-emotional learning) is critical. Each day we help children learn social skills real-time, while simultaneously training the next generation of educational leaders to expand the benefits to others.

## The *LevelUP SEL* Program

*LevelUP SEL* is a dynamic mutually beneficial program, in which we provide supervision, training, and work experience for young college and graduate school students. Simultaneously, the *LevelUP SEL* team advances the social/emotional skills of elementary school children — improving their attendance, academic achievement, and personal development. The program provides an intensive workplace training opportunity for those in college, while hundreds of young students in elementary schools personally benefit from the guidance and expertise of these higher education students.

## Applied SEL in Action

The *LevelUP SEL* program artfully advances the development of core SEL skills through the process of experiential learning. This is our in-person real-time approach that allows us to connect meaningfully with the children. Applying SEL in real-time interactions results in improved academic achievement, professional advancement, and personal transformation. The outcomes are immediate and long term.

## Our Approach

*Play is our Platform!* We have found that we can engage children to collaborate, listen, self-regulate, identify feelings, respond appropriately, show appreciation, and resolve conflict better through PLAY! Guided play creates opportunities for children to develop and improve social skills, flexibility, problem-solving, and resiliency. Learning through play helps children to interact more confidently and appropriately in social settings. The *Platform of Play* has proven advantages for delivering SEL.

- Improves attention and listening
- Builds problem-solving skills
- Explores feelings while building empathy
- Establishes a stronger sense of community
- Develops self-regulation
- Reduces various kinds of anxiety
- Helps with self-awareness and perspective taking

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Lunchtime can be an oasis of an opportunity for children to practice many skills, and in particular, it can help students who struggle with social stress and related anxiety. Through our program, students in grades K-5 receive social and emotional support at lunchtime that makes them feel connected and included. *LevelUP SEL* creates a supportive and enriching experience during lunch, the most difficult part of the day for many. Current research supports that lunch and recess are highly challenging times for students and can interfere with classroom learning and academic performance. According to The Journal of Community Psychology, a sense of belonging at school is key to a student's success and is associated with all types of positive outcomes including academic, social and emotional. All these are reasons why we choose lunch time.

**MORE on *Level UP SEL*** — *A transformative learning opportunity for emerging professionals*  
*LevelUP SEL* has a diverse cohort of mostly female college interns who are trained and supervised by experienced professionals in the fields of education and social work. Many of them have been recruited with the help of CCNY and Lehman College and they are a fully diverse representation of New York. The program increases the competence of these interns and offers an opportunity to strengthen leadership skills through meaningful fieldwork experience.

TMH's tested approach focuses on cultivating and teaching leadership skills to emerging educational and mental health students, who are diverse, first generation, female students.

On a weekly basis during lunch, our *LevelUP SEL* interns join elementary students in the cafeteria as positive role models, guiding them through a series of engaging and interactive games, all oriented in play. They deliberately focus on creating opportunities for SEL moments of growth and experience that will support the children's development in school and beyond.

Using games, art activities, and puzzles (*Platform of Play*), the college interns engage small groups of children during play moments that provide unique opportunities for self-expression, collaboration, responsible decision making, and communication with their peers. These competencies are at the heart of the *Twenty-First Century Skills* and five interrelated core social and emotional skills defined in the *CASEL* Framework.

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## Internal Survey of our *LevelUP SEL* Interns 2023-24

Our interns reported on their own transformative experiences:

- 90% saw improvement in flexibility, empathy and social-awareness skills.
- 80% saw improvement in SEL language, communication and self-awareness skills.
- 100% felt commitment to social work/education careers as a result of *TMH LevelUP SEL*
- 100% saw improvement in their social-emotional learning abilities.
- 90% saw increase in improved academic performance.

## Feedback from our *LevelUP SEL* Interns 2023-24

“My knowledge of SEL has improved greatly, as has my ability to maintain perspective and keep calm while stressed, intervene in necessary situations, and relate to the children we serve.”

“With this program I have been able to take in what I have been doing in my classes and partner it with the skills I have been developing here in order to be an effective educator.”

“I have really valued this internship in terms of reinforcing my career in social work. The training aspect has been really helpful.”

“This program has pushed me to be more aware and honest about myself and the relationships I have. I have made so many changes in my personal life to create a healthier emotional and social environment for myself and I believe this will reflect in the way that I teach and interact with the children and adults that I work with.”

“My time here has been great, and my communication skills are improving. I did not expect so many exercises and training weaved through the program. I really enjoy the continuous learning approach.”

“I have learned a lot about what SEL is and its curriculum, and this internship really sparked my interest in children’s SEL development and the field of social work.”

## Sample Daily Schedule for the *LevelUP SEL* Program

9:00 – 9:15 am	Welcome Snack and Emotional Check-In
9:15 – 11:00 am	SEL in Action Classroom
11:00 -1:00 pm	Hands on experience with elementary school students
1:00 – 2:00 pm	Lunch, Reflection and Debrief

## LINKS:

<https://www.themeetinghousesel.org/50-essential-social-skills>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zmvS08tBkw0>